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Radicalization in the Persian Gulf: Assessing the potential of Islamist militancy in Saudi Arabia and Yemen

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Islamist militancy in Saudi Arabia and Yemen ebbs and flows, but it is a recurring phenomenon that has underlying regional, political, and cultural determinants. Successes against specific terrorist threats are negated in the long term by the failure of these countries to undertake political and institutional reforms that might undermine existing elite alignments and challenge entrenched interests. This article investigates the key fighting groups in these countries, their motivation for engaging in violence, the methods by which they recruit and activate militants, and the environments in which further radicalization may occur. While Islamist militancy potentially threatens the entire Gulf region, Saudi Arabia and Yemen are pivotal states that deserve an in-depth look because of their ongoing troubles with radical Islamism. Each of these countries has Sunni extremists associated with Jihadi Salafism and the Al Qaeda transnational movement, a Sunni-Shiite fault line that has produced sectarian earthquakes in the recent past, and a double-edged relationship with the United States – their alliance brings security and financial assistance, but also public disapproval and charges of collaboration with infidels. Radical Islamists in Saudi Arabia and Yemen face serious obstacles to mass mobilization, but Yemen appears to be more vulnerable to Islamist violence than Saudi Arabia in the next decade.

Keywords: Islamism; Al Qaeda; terrorism; radicalization; Saudi Arabia; Yemen; Persian Gulf

Introduction

Islamist militancy in the Gulf is intimately connected to regional and international developments. Iraq's civil war, tensions between the United States and Iran, and the unresolved struggle between Israel and its neighbors in Palestine and Lebanon are likely to fan the flames of sectarianism, anti-Americanism, and global jihadism for years to come. Understanding the threat of Islamist militancy in the Gulf is particularly important given the global interests that reside within that region. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), along with Iraq, Iran and Yemen, maintain some 84 per cent of the world's oil reserves and one-third of its natural gas reserves. Al Qaeda's leaders recognize the significance of these resources to the global economy and, consequently, have encouraged their followers to attack oil facilities in order to cut the West's economic lifeline and punish states that cooperate with the United States in the war on terrorism.[1]

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In addition to oil, the US military presence, in the GCC through forward bases in Iraq, Qatar and Bahrain, and a substantial number of troops in Kuwait, makes the threat of Islamist militancy a paramount concern. Security assistance to develop the capacity of local allies, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and Yemen, makes each of these countries susceptible to charges of collaboration with enemies of Muslims.

This article seeks to assess the prospects for Islamist radicalization in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. It investigates the key fighting groups, their motivation for mobilizing, the methods by which they recruit and activate militants, and the environments in which further radicalization may occur. While Islamist militancy potentially threatens the entire Gulf region, Saudi Arabia and Yemen are pivotal states that deserve an in-depth look because of their ongoing troubles with radical Islamism. Each of these countries has Sunni extremists associated with Jihadi Salafism and the Al Qaeda transnational movement, a Sunni-Shiite fault line that has produced sectarian earthquakes in the recent past, and a double-edged relationship with the United States in which their alliance brings security and financial assistance, but also public disapproval and charges of collaboration with infidels.

Since the start of the new millennium, radical Islamists have become assertive in each of these Gulf countries. In Yemen, transnational terrorists associated with the Afghan camps of the 1990s have carried out major operations, including the attack on the USS *Cole* and the French oil tanker, *Limburg*. From January 2000 to September 2006, Yemen experienced 44 major incidents of violence, ranging from kidnappings and assassinations to conventional car bombings and suicide terrorism.[2] Many attacks were also foiled by the authorities. Most attacks in Yemen by radical Sunnis have targeted Western interests, not the national government. However, the crackdown by the Yemeni authorities against some of the radical Islamists produced a number of clashes in which Yemeni government troops were killed and injured.

In Saudi Arabia, radical Islamists, also associated with the Al Qaeda movement, began a major campaign of bombings in 2003 after a series of small-scale attacks on Western expatriates since 2000. Between May 2003 and April 2007, Saudi Arabia witnessed 61 armed confrontations between security forces and militants. In the same time period, radical Islamists carried out 34 operations, mainly against Western targets. These clashes and attacks have produced approximately 300 casualties, killing 130–150 militants and 25 Westerners.[3] As in Yemen, Saudi militants seek by intimidation to drive Westerners out of the Arabian Peninsula. In both Yemen and Saudi Arabia, oil facilities and the companies that manage them are targets.

The threat environment in the Gulf is becoming even more complex because of the prospects of returning fighters from Iraq, Sunni-Shiite sectarian tensions in the area, and regional competition between Iran and GCC states. Saudi Arabia appears to be in a better position to deal with radical Islamism than Yemen. Saudi Arabia is one of the richest countries in the world with a strong state capacity to monitor borders, track militants, and suppress radical Islamists. It also employs elements of "soft power" through a campaign to discredit the ideas of radical Islamism and a deradicalization program that seeks to reintegrate captured militants. Yemen, on the other hand, is one of the poorest countries in the world and has a weak state with strong internal sympathies for jihadists. Yemen lacks the capacity and will to address the facilitators of radicalization, and its deradicalization program is understood to have a revolving-door policy toward captured jihadists.

Key actors and motivation for mobilizing

The main violent actors operating in Saudi Arabia and Yemen fall into the Jihadi Salafist camp: Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (QAP) and Al Qaeda of Jihad Organization in Yemen (AQY).[4] These groups are an amalgam of mainly local radicals and foreign militants associated with transnational jihadists linked to the Afghan camps of the 1990s and veterans of conflicts in the Muslim world, including Bosnia, Chechnya, and Iraq.

QAP is a Jihadi Salafist faction that pledges fealty to Usama Bin Laden (UBL). It is estimated to have had 500 members in 2003.[5] The original leadership, which was closely linked to UBL, was decimated by state repression in 2003–04 after a wave of suicide bombings and other attacks on Western targets. By the summer of 2003, Yousef Al-Ayiri, the first leader of the group and a close associate of UBL, had been killed and two of the four military cells destroyed. Abdel Aziz Al-Muqrin, who replaced Al-Ayiri, instructed the remaining militants to organize into separate cells and encouraged them to undertake independent attacks based on general strategic guidelines he issued through the Internet. These cells – made up of individuals linked by kinship, friendship, and activist ties – planned and executed attacks as well as obtained their own financing, Internet propaganda, weapon smuggling, and recruitment. They engaged in shooting attacks, car bombings, assassinations, and suicide terrorism.

QAP has had two immediate objectives. The first is to "cleanse" Saudi Arabia of any Western, especially US presence, because Western states are at war with Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq, and because the Prophet Muhammad commanded Muslims to "remove the infidels from the Arabian Peninsula." The second objective is to undermine the global economy and Saudi ruling family by disrupting the flow of oil coming from the kingdom.[6]

Prior to 2003, Saudi terrorist attacks concentrated on US military personnel and facilities and Western expatriates. Between 2000 and 2003, most attacks were small-scale attempts at coercing foreigners into leaving the country. After 2003, the targets remained the same, but the nature of attacks became more deadly with the use of suicide attackers intent on mass casualty operations. In 2005–06, QAP demonstrated an interest in attacking oil facilities after they were urged to do so by Al Qaeda leaders hiding along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border.

Saudi militants justify attacks on US and other Western personnel and interests in both instrumental and religious terms. They argue that the United States and its allies are enemies that fight Muslims and aid their oppressors in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and all over the world. Therefore, it is necessary – indeed a religious obligation – to fight back. Furthermore, Westerners in the Arabian Peninsula are not protected by the Islamic principle of the "covenant of security" because Muslims are in an actual war with the United States and its allies. In addition, the covenant of security is not valid in the Arabian Peninsula because it was granted by an apostate ruler, not a Muslim one. Westerners are not in the Arabian Peninsula to engage in fair trade, but rather to plunder Muslim oil wealth. Finally, according to the principle of reciprocity, it is permissible to kill Western men, women and children because they do the same to Muslim men, women, and children.[7]

Since 2004, QAP appears to have added a third objective – undermine the rule of the Al Saud ruling family – in addition to attacking Western economic interests and dislodging foreigners from the Arabia Peninsula. In December 2004, it carried out a suicide bombing against the Interior Ministry building and the Special Emergency Force

training center. Interior Ministry reports claim that QAP was planning attacks on members of the ruling family, senior religious clerics, and members of the security forces.[8] Although QAP charges the ruling elite with apostasy, it has so far avoided declaring anyone working for the regime to be an apostate. This form of generalized *takfir* (declaring Muslims to be infidels) of public employees and the police is the likely next step if QAP decides to pursue an all-out war against the ruling family.

Saudi militants have so far avoided targeting Shiites in the Eastern province. Despite deep-rooted antipathy toward the Shiites, Saudi extremists have so far not found sectarian differences to be a sufficient reason to attack. As long as the Shiites are in a subordinate position relative to the dominant Wahhabi establishment, they are safe. However, the prophetic command that "there shall not be two religions on the Arabian Peninsula" could one day be extended to the Shiites because of their alleged "heretical" practices. Furthermore, sectarian spillover from Iraq could generate attacks on Shiites in the kingdom.

Today, the QAP network is fragmented, penetrated by security forces, and ineffectual when compared to its heyday in 2003–04. The last major operation claimed by QAP in the kingdom was the foiled suicide bombing at the Abqaiq oil facility in February 2006. In April 2007, the authorities announced that they had broken up seven cells comprising 172 members, many of whom were trained abroad – including in Iraq and Yemen – to carry out spectacular attacks on oil facilities, Westerners, and government targets in Saudi Arabia.[9] In November 2007, the authorities announced that they had arrested 208 militants across six cells responsible for media production, finance, and recruitment. Other cells are said to have been planning attacks on oil facilities and assassinations of senior clerics. It is difficult to verify the accuracy of these Interior Ministry reports, but the absence of a major QAP offensive inside Saudi Arabia in the last three years suggests that the network is encountering serious recruitment and operational obstacles.[10]

Yemen is also experiencing a menacing challenge from Sunni radicals associated with Al Qaeda. The latter has demonstrated the intention and a modest capability to strike at Western targets. Yemen has been described as a "rest stop," "transit point," and "staging ground" for radical militants and transnational jihadists associated with Al Qaeda.[11] Yemen, however, is increasingly becoming a major arena of operations for Al Qaeda. In September 2006, AQY attempted to blow up Western and state-owned oil facilities in al-Dhabba and Safr with two teams of vehicle-borne suicide bombers. Communiqué no. 1 from the group claimed that the attackers were following UBL's instructions to attack Western oil interests in the region.[12] The September 2006 attacks were almost a carbon copy of the February 2006 foiled suicide attacks on the Abqaiq oil facility in Saudi Arabia. Had both the Saudi and Yemeni attacks succeeded, the world oil markets would have suffered major price shocks, and the Yemeni economy would have been devastated further.

Although radical Islamists in Yemen are mainly Yemeni nationals with a mix of foreign militants, these radicals appear to be pursuing a transnational agenda more than a national one. They have two objectives: strike Western economic and military targets to serve Al Qaeda's broader strategy of harming Western economies, and serve as a safe haven, supply store, and recruitment ground for jihadists in the Gulf and Horn of Africa. These objectives can be deduced from their targeting pattern since 2000, when Yemeni militants sponsored by Al Qaeda attacked the USS *Cole*. Since then, local Islamists have targeted a French oil tanker, a helicopter owned by a US oil company, Western residents and workers, and US missionaries. Many operations were foiled, including attacks on the British embassy in Sanaa, the French Cultural Center, and a number of Western embassies.[13]

As in Saudi Arabia, attacks on Western interests induced a counterterrorism response to the radicals, which in turn unleashed retaliatory attacks on government forces and security services. Since 2002, Yemeni Islamists have targeted the civil aviation building in Sanaa and the headquarters of the Political Security Organization, which reports directly to the president; clashed with government forces in Marib, killing 22 of them; and assassinated a judge and an intelligence official presiding over security cases. According to Yemeni authorities, many other operations were foiled at the planning stage, including attacks on parliament, the prime minister, the central bank of Yemen, Yemen's airline offices, and the state broadcasting station.[14]

These targets match the list proposed by Abu Musab al-Suri, the renowned ideologue of global jihad, now in US custody. He argued that Yemen is an ideal launching pad for jihad in the Gulf. Yemen could be used to strike at "apostate" and "collaborator" regimes, as well as at the "crusaders" and "colonial enterprises" in the region. Suri believes close proximity to oil-rich Saudi Arabia as well as countries allied with the United States, including Ethiopia, Egypt, and Israel, gives Yemen geostrategic significance. He urged Yemeni militants to attack six targets: missionary centers, economic interests ("imperialistic companies" and "floating oil tankers"), diplomatic buildings, intelligence agencies, foreign military bases, and tourists.[15]

The main culprits behind the attacks in Yemen are Al Qaeda-affiliated militants. AQY's first communiqué in November 2006 clearly marks it as a Jihadi Salafist group with a transnational agenda. First, the communiqué referred to its cadres as people of the *tawhid wal jihad* (which has been the slogan of Jihadi Salafists since the 1990s). It also declared, "We renew our pledge and blind obedience to our Emir Sheikh Usama bin Muhammad bin Laden." Second, the communiqué referred to the US forces and other Westerners as "crusaders" and to the Yemeni government as an "apostate collaborator." Third, it justified AQY's attack on oil facilities as an attempt to "stop the theft and looting of the wealth of Muslims, which reinforces the enemies of the Islamic religion in their war on Muslims and Islam." This justification mirrors that of QAP. Fourth, it called on "the Yemeni devil to repent to Allah and return to his religion, govern by *sharia* [Islamic law], reject democracy, which is America's religion, and abandon helping the infidels and making enemies of the believing people." These themes are the mainstay of Jihadi Salafism. Finally, the communiqué dedicated one of its operations to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the fallen leader of AQI, suggesting that AQY is ideologically aligned with Jihadi Salafists in Iraq.[16]

Like QAP, AQY has not declared all employees of the Yemeni government and security forces to be apostates. As indicated earlier, such a declaration of generalized *takfir* is a necessary stepping stone to an all-out rebellion against the state. Furthermore, as in Saudi Arabia, Jihadi Salafists have not launched attacks on Zaydi Shiites in Yemen, despite historic tensions and occasional clashes between Salafists and Zaydis in some regions of the country. These facts suggest that there is still room for the further expansion of Islamist radicalization in Yemen.

Mobilizing methods

Recruitment for national and transnational jihad since 2001 has been aided tremendously by the wars on terrorism and in Iraq. Jihadists have successfully portrayed both wars as fierce attacks on Islam. Moreover, jihadists have constructed a master narrative in which the suffering and humiliation of Muslims around the world are directly linked to the collaboration of their own regimes with the enemies of Islam.[17] Finally, jihadists have been

able to exploit images of Muslim suffering in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Lebanon to foster moral outrage among Muslim bystanders.

QAP members are mainly Saudis in their late twenties, but the group has strong transnational ties and some foreign members. Most of QAP's commanders and rank-and-file were groomed in the Afghan training camps and other international conflicts during the 1990s. Some foreigners from Chad, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Syria, and Yemen serve as foot soldiers and even top-level commanders.[18] According to Thomas Hegghammer, a leading expert on Saudi militants, recruitment in the kingdom is mainly an urban phenomenon. The overwhelming majority of QAP members, 53 percent, come from Riyadh (only 21 percent of the population resides in the capital). Thus, recruits are not mainly drawn from peripheral and poor tribal regions, as is often assumed.[19]

QAP core members had a previous history of activism in Afghanistan prior to joining the organization. This experience was necessary to acquire the skills, ideology, and culture of jihadism that has propelled its campaign since 2003. It also linked Saudis with the Al Qaeda transnational movement, enabling them to recruit foreigners and acquire resources regionally and internationally. Volunteers often went to Afghanistan to acquire the skills necessary to defend fellow Muslims in Chechnya and other conflict zones, not to fight their own governments. Images of Muslim suffering in those areas – just as in Iraq today – impelled some to volunteer. Kinship and friendship bonds facilitated volunteerism, as some went with their friends or in order to follow in the footsteps of relatives. The Saudi government and religious authorities supported Muslim struggles materially and ideologically and did not prevent their youth from fighting in those conflicts. When the Taliban regime was attacked in 2001, many went to defend that "genuinely Islamic" government at the urging of clerics.[20]

Returnees from Afghanistan constituted the network that generated further recruits within the kingdom. These returnees drew upon friendship, kinship, and activist ties to expand their ranks. Direct recruitment took place in informal religious study groups and lectures organized by returnees from Afghanistan and sympathetic clerics. Hegghammer describes the recruitment process: "Typically, the recruiter and the recruit would meet at informal gatherings in private homes. Then the recruiter would invite the recruit to smaller gatherings or one-to-one conversations in order to assess his motivation and qualifications. If the recruit was promising, he would be introduced to the recruiter's superior, who would decide on how to integrate the recruit in the organization."[21]

The war in Iraq makes the recruiters' pitch credible. Given that jihad in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and elsewhere was widely portrayed by the government and religious establishment as legitimate defense of Muslim territories against unbelievers, recruiters today argue that Iraq is no different from those struggles. It is the individual obligation of Saudis to support fellow Muslims by attacks on Westerners either in Iraq or inside the kingdom. They also point out the impotence and complicity of local governments in the face of the invading US forces, meaning that if ordinary Muslims do not fight, Islam would be in grave danger. Saudi militants have operated camps in the provinces bordering Iraq (Al-Jawf, Hail, and Qasim) to facilitate entry into and out of that country. These sites attract ordinary campers for preaching and outdoor adventure during the summer, providing opportunities for socialization with potential recruits. Once candidates have been recruited, the border camps offer basic military training while advanced skills are acquired across the border in Iraq or Yemen.

Recruitment for militancy in Yemen is not a difficult task. Yemen has contributed fighters to all three generations of global jihad (the first generation was in Afghanistan against the Soviets, the second was also in Afghanistan in Al Qaeda's training camps, and

the third is the jihad in Iraq).[22] Radical Islamists are part of the political process and security services. Foreign dissidents wanted by their governments are naturally attracted to Yemen for shelter. Tribes in the north have been known to harbor Al Qaeda fugitives. Thus, the ideational and organizational prerequisites for jihad are present in Yemen.[23]

Yemen has a long and sordid history of radical Islamists. Many Yemenis were encouraged to aid the Afghan struggle against the Soviet Union during the 1980s. Many of the returnees from Afghanistan were used as foot soldiers in the Yemeni civil war, in which the North routed the South. Afterwards, ''Arab Afghans'' were incorporated into the security services as assets of the ruling regime. The Political Security Organization, originally used by President Salih as an intelligence and security apparatus outside the Ministry of Interior, is filled with Arab Afghans.[24] Moreover, radical Islamists fleeing arrest in their home countries, especially Egyptians and Saudis, found Yemen to be a hospitable safe haven. Yemenis are the third largest group represented in Al Qaeda (after Egyptians and North Africans). High-profile operatives include Ramzi bin al-Shibh, one of the 9/11 planners, and Khalid al-Mihdar, one of the 19 hijackers.[25]

The regime's inclusion of Islamists served to dampen their anti-establishment activism; they were co-opted to keep the regime safe from their troubles. But these former jihadists are sympathetic to anti-US militants and Yemeni fighters abroad. They oppose Yemen's cooperation in the war on terrorism and, undoubtedly, hold UBL in high esteem because of his ideological and material support for their struggle against the communists in Yemen during the early 1990s. A court ruling in late 2006 concerning a ''Zarqawi cell'' in Yemen is illustrative of the widespread sympathy for jihadists. Two judges found 14 Yemenis and five Saudis held on security-related charges ''not guilty,'' despite acknowledging that the 19 defendants had traveled to Iraq to fight against the United States. In their court trial they shouted: ''God, give victory to our Shaykh Usama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi, and all the mujahidin in all the Muslim countries.'' The judges ruled that in Yemen's constitution and legal system it is not a crime to fight invaders – it is a religious duty.[26]

Yemen's AQY is made up of Yemeni nationals with a small contingent of foreign dissidents. Many of its members are connected to second-generation global jihadists who trained in Afghanistan. Some of them initially rallied around the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA) in the late 1990s. AAIA was located in the south of Yemen when it was formed by Arab Afghans headed by Zayn al-Abidin Abu Bakr al-Mihdar (Abu Hassan). The latter was executed in 1999 after he took Western hostages, four of whom were killed in a botched rescue attempt. AAIA carried out its first operation in the name of UBL. It also claimed responsibility for the attack on the USS *Cole* in 2000, but this operation was actually led by Qaid Salim Sinan (''Abu Ali'') al-Harithi, an Al Qaeda operative in Yemen. Al-Harithi and several AAIA members were assassinated in 2002 by the CIA. The close connections between AAIA members and Al Qaeda operatives suggest that AAIA is essentially an affiliate of Al Qaeda, not a distinct entity.[27]

AAIA replaced its executed leader Abu Hassan with Khaled Abdel Nabi. It also claimed responsibility for the bombing of the British Council in 2000 and the *Limburg* attack in 2002. However, since those attacks, Khaled Abdel Nabi has been pardoned by the Yemeni government, and he asserts that AAIA has disbanded. It is more reasonable to conclude that AAIA members operate under the new title of AQY.

Recruitment for jihadists in recent years has come from the Abyan Governorate in the south and the Masik neighborhood at the heart of Sanaa. The first is home to the AAIA and Tariq al-Fadli, who headed the Islamic Jihad movement in the early 1990s before joining the parliament. The second is home to the assassins of three US doctors in Jibla

(south of Sanaa) and the assistant secretary general of the Yemeni Socialist Party.[28] Shabwah, another southern governorate and the home of the former Al Qaeda commander Abu Ali al-Harithi, is recognized as a major source of recruits for jihadists in Iraq.[29]

Recruiters for external jihad are free to roam in the country. In 2006, Professor Bernard Haykel of New York University interviewed a recruiter who openly spoke about his activities and methods. Although officially a wanted man, he did not seem concerned about being captured, as he spent two days with his guest and moved about freely.[30] The fact that the jihad in Iraq is widely viewed as a defensive one makes it easier for recruiters to mobilize. As Khalid Abdel Nabi, a former AAIA commander, puts it: "This is God's law, and fighting Iraq's occupiers is the duty of all capable Yemeni young men before being the duty of the Iraqis." Abdel Nabi and others recognize that the government's rhetoric in support of the war on terrorism "has to do with its political calculations."[31] Yemeni security services that release "reformed" militants do not consider volunteering in Iraq to be a topic worth discussing. A security official recently confided to an Arab journalist, "We told the Americans that we cannot arrest Yemenis just because they oppose their occupation of Iraq ... this is not an issue for the security services."[32]

Radicalizing environments

There are major political, cultural and regional factors that could aid in the spread of, or deepen support for, Islamist militancy in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Saudi Arabia appears to be safe in the near future, but the factors that have given rise to militancy in the past are still present. As of 2007, the Saudi regime has succeeded in crushing the initial terrorist threat posed by QAP. However, close ties to the United States, perceived corruption on the part of the ruling family, and an exclusionary political system make Saudi Arabia vulnerable to recurring patterns of radicalization. Yemen has multiple vulnerabilities that are visible to jihadists. These include half-hearted cooperation with the international community in the war on terrorism, weak state capacity to monitor terrorist activities in the tribal regions, and a culture of arms that makes Yemen an ideal staging ground for transnational terrorists.

A common theme running through Islamist rebellions in Saudi Arabia has been the ruling family's excessive reliance on Westerners for protection. From the Ikhwan's rebellion in the late 1920s and Juhayman's revolt in Mecca in 1979 to the critique of the Sahwa movement and UBL in the 1990s, Islamists have used the unholy alliance with Western countries, especially the United States, as a sharp prod to deflate the legitimacy of the ruling family. Critics of the ruling regime argue that reliance on Westerners for the security of the kingdom results in subservience to infidels (*tawwali al-kuffar*) on matters that concern Muslims.[33] While there are no longer US bases in the kingdom, radical Islamists continue to chide their rulers for cooperating with the United States in the war on terrorism, which is widely viewed as a war on Islam; for the US presence in Iraq and Afghanistan; and for the US support for Israel. As indicated earlier, this stance toward the United States is not merely a pan-nationalist critique, but also a religious one based on the precept of *wala wal bara* (loyalty to Muslims and disassociation from unbelievers). Al Saud's rule is legitimized by a conservative Islamic ideology, but this ideology has proven to be a double-edged sword. It exposes the elite to Islamic critiques that are not easily parried by establishment scholars.

Al Saud is also vulnerable to charges of moral, financial, and administrative corruption. The complete monopoly over oil wealth and control over major businesses

by ruling princes invariably raises claims that state wealth is stolen and mismanaged for the benefit of the few. This has been a consistent critique of UBL, but one also echoed by many of the Sahwa scholars during the 1990s.[34] King Abdullah has been keen to implement major developmental projects to show that oil wealth is being put to good use. He initiated several measures to improve the living conditions of Saudi nationals, including a 15 percent hike in salaries and multi-billion-dollar handouts for various social projects in the fields of health, education and housing. However, the systemic nature of the economic control by ruling princes makes it difficult to ensure financial transparency and accountability as well as developmental "generosity" over the long term, especially in a highly repressive political system that does not brook public charges of elite corruption or debates over resource allocation.

Charges of moral corruption also stem from the rapid modernization of the kingdom. Travelers to Riyadh, Jeddah, and Mecca are mesmerized by the inventiveness and elegance of some of the newly constructed high-rises, roads, businesses, and public facilities. All the amenities of modern life – the Internet, shopping malls, McDonald's, Starbucks, and SUVs – can be found in this highly conservative society. Rapid development invariably brings with it conspicuous consumption, foreign presence, and liberal norms. The duality of modern living and the traditional ethos of Saudi society makes it feasible to criticize the ruling family – the most liberal and modern among them, in particular – for spreading corruption (*fasad*) and vice (*munkar*) in the land of the two holy sanctuaries.

The rigid and oppressive nature of the Saudi ruling system is another facilitator of radicalization. Although highly repressive regimes are least susceptible to sustained terrorism and rebellion, they tend to experience violent convulsions under the stress of major economic and political crises as well as during periods of institutional reforms and transition (à la Algeria during the 1990s and Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein). If social control depends on having a monopoly of the economic, security, and ideational spheres of society, it would be fair to say that Al Saud is in complete control of its citizenry. Economically speaking, the regime is in control of the oil fields and its ruling princes own partially or completely the major businesses in the country. Security-wise, the Saudi family has numerous princes throughout the officer corps and in key security posts to prevent a military clique from overthrowing the regime through a coup.

As for ideological control, Al Saud continues to align itself with the Al Shaykh family and its Wahhabi establishment to provide religious legitimacy for the ruling order. The Saudi state is thus marked by another dualism: modernized technocrats manage the state's economic and administrative affairs and its foreign policy, while traditional religious figures (empowered by modern technologies) manage all aspects of the social sphere. This contradiction exposes the ruling establishment to a religious critique. Islamists charge Al Saud with institutionalizing secularism by allocating politics, economics, and foreign policy to the secularists while giving the religious establishment the domain of culture and public morality.

The consultative council (*majlis al-shura*), the main institution that should check the ruling elite, has few formal powers and even fewer in practice. Political parties are banned and the irregular municipal elections are heavily circumscribed – and half of municipal officials are appointed. Most institutional reforms that have taken place since the accession of King Abdullah have been tinkering on the edges to ensure that Al Saud continues to rule the kingdom without destabilizing internal dissent. The fact that the United States is putting more emphasis on stability in the next few years means that the Saudi regime can avoid making reforms that would usher in genuine political freedoms.

Public debate is also controlled. After 9/11, many liberals saw an opportunity to exert pressure on the ruling family to implement reforms. In 2006, the debate between liberals and Islamists intensified in the press and on the Internet. While some initially viewed such open contestation as signs of growing tolerance in the kingdom, it did not take long for the King to issue calls for maintaining national unity by avoiding divisive debates and ideologies that might push the country toward secularism or extremism. In 2006, some liberals and human rights advocates were rounded up by the regime on charges of financing terrorists abroad. Such signals create a chilling effect among reformers.[35]

Legitimization of the ruling family by the Wahhabi establishment is not without its problems. The Wahhabis hold views that are central to Jihadi Salafism. For example, notions of jihad as *fard ayn* (individual obligation) in Iraq and Afghanistan, the concept of *wala wal bara*, and rejection of foreign presence in the Arabian peninsula are positions advanced by traditional Wahhabi scholars, not just the radicals. As several recent studies point out, the ideological overlap between apolitical and Jihadi Salafists is substantial.[36]

Since the late 1990s, the regime has managed to co-opt its traditional critics in the Sahwa movement. This move further eliminated debate within the kingdom regarding the legitimacy and politics of the ruling family. Sahwa clerics now concentrate on opposing liberal reformers. To the extent they present a political critique, it is one directed at the United States and its foreign policies. Such co-optation of former regime critics makes the radicals the sole opposition to officialdom.

The repressive political system, the religious discourse with which it legitimizes itself, and the limits imposed on contestation mean that those interested in opposition are often forced to express themselves in the most extreme religious terms to justify their dissent. As one expert aptly put it, "In the absence of other means of expressing difference, criticism or disagreement with the ruler, excommunicating him becomes the only possible mechanism; violence becomes the only means of changing the situation."[37] Jihadists have been using new media technologies to promote their radical ideology. The widespread access to the Internet, satellite television, and cell phones, along with high rates of literacy in the kingdom and Wahhabi clerical networks sympathetic to jihadists, enable radicals to subvert the official discourse and present radicalizing messages to mobilize a new generation of jihadists. The growth of jihadi websites, CDs and DVDs, Web forums, and online magazines and technical manuals means that the monopoly of the means of communication has been broken and the potential for a counter-discourse is growing.

Recruitment in Saudi Arabia is tremendously constrained by a vigilant security apparatus. Its counterterrorism strategy works on four levels: infiltrate and eliminate existing cells, deny militants the resources necessary for operations, harden targets that might be attacked by QAP, and discredit extremism by engaging in a war of ideas. Saudi authorities have proven capable of identifying and hunting down wanted militants. As indicated earlier, there have been more armed clashes in attempts to arrest and kill militants than there have been successful operations in the kingdom.[38] They authorities also try to facilitate the break-up of cells and gain intelligence through amnesty programs. Those who turn themselves in are debriefed to gain information on wanted militants. The crushing blows delivered by the state since 2003 have forced QAP to rely on foreign connections and operatives to finance and rebuild its capacity in the kingdom.[39] Many militants and wanted suspects decided to go to Iraq and fight there rather than persist in a failing struggle in the kingdom.[40]

Controls over Saudi charities were beefed up to deprive militants of their sources of funding. In 2006, the Ministry of Social Affairs ordered the Bin Baz Charity Foundation

to close its offices throughout the kingdom. The government also cracked down on unauthorized fundraising in schools, mosques, and shopping malls.[41]

The authorities have also increased security at critical infrastructure and potential soft targets that could be struck by QAP, including residential compounds of foreign nationals, luxury hotels, and oil facilities. The government has set up a training program to equip and deploy 35,000 security personnel to protect oil installations.[42]

The most important counterterrorism program involves countering the appeal of extremism. In 2005, the Saudi government announced a plan to engage in an ideological struggle with the radicals. The general mission of this struggle includes exposing the prevailing radical ideas and refuting them; publicizing the negative consequences of radical action for society, especially the killing of fellow Muslims; generating public awareness of the dangers of radical ideas in order to inoculate society with preventive arguments; going after the producers of extremist ideas and silencing them; and closing down the arenas in which radical ideas spread.

This program amounts to painting jihadists as social revolutionaries that seek to alter Saudi society radically, not as devout Muslims fighting to defend their lands and Muslim neighbors from Western occupation and imperialism. It is easier to mobilize young Saudi men to fight foreign "invaders" than to rebel against their rulers. The Saudi state and the Wahhabi establishment have promoted jihad against foreigners since the late 1970s, beginning with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and later in Bosnia and Chechnya. The Saudis carried out telethons to collect money and gold for Palestinian suicide bombers in the Al Aqsa uprising (2000–06). The radicals often draw on this tradition of pan-Islamic nationalism to argue that the hostile Western presence in the kingdom and Iraq is akin to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and the Israeli presence in Palestine. Why is it permissible to fight invaders abroad, but not at home?

Given this tradition, the Saudi state has gone to great lengths to portray the current breed of militants not as defenders of Muslim lands, but as social revolutionaries intent on replacing the Saudi state and Wahhabi establishment with something different and unprecedented in Sunni Islam. They equate them with the historic sect known as the *kharijites* (those who secede from the rulers), a reference to the first civil war in Islamic history. They also equate them with the Shiite revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran in 1979, accusing them of harboring the ideas of *wilayat al-faqih* (rule by the jurists) espoused by Khomeini. This accusation is ironic given the Wahhabi control of the social sphere in Saudi Arabia. Such discourse is intended to prevent middle-class Saudis and the state-supported Wahhabi clerics from giving support to the radicals.

The Saudi state has mobilized all the instruments of religious control to counter the appeal of Al Qaeda. Refusing to call them Islamists and jihadists, the authorities and official press refer to militants as "deviants" (*al-fiah al-Dhala*) and "the deceived ones" (*al-mugharar bihm*). The council of senior scholars regularly condemns terrorism and calls on people to support the security services in their hunt for militants. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has been examining all mosque officials and sending some off for "retraining." The Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs has intensified its monitoring of the 30,000 mosques and their attendant preachers and clerics. Standardized mosque sermons distributed by the government are full of messages against extremism. Media programs such as *Facts from Within the Cell* feature repentant militants talking about their experiences in a negative light. The Saudi funded Al Arabiya Satellite TV presents a weekly program, *Death Industry*, which openly discusses the phenomenon of terrorism with experts. Just as important, the Saudi regime recruited the well-respected *Sahwa* (Awakening) scholars, who were imprisoned during the

early 1990s for opposing the US presence in the kingdom, to counter Al Qaeda's radical themes.

The Saudis also set up a *lajnat al-munasiha* (Guidance Committee) within the Interior Ministry. This committee engages former militants (but not those with blood on their hands) in ideological and theological discussions with high-profile clerics in order to reform them. Those who repent are sometimes released, put under surveillance, and prevented from traveling abroad. They are also given opportunities to reintegrate in society by giving them a job and even helping them marry.[43] The committee brings religious scholars, psychologists, and social workers, among others, to discuss the experiences of captured or repentant militants, point out their theological "errors," and persuade them to adopt moderation in thought and action. In practice, this amounts to rebutting the mobilizing themes of Al Qaeda about the illegitimacy of Saudi rulers, the impermissibility of having non-Muslims (especially Westerners) residing in the Arabian Peninsula, and the necessity of jihad inside the kingdom.[44] Reformed individuals are sometimes used to tout the virtues of the program in the media as well as to appeal to wanted militants to give up in the hope of receiving similar treatment. Released individuals have their passports taken away, their movement is restricted to a certain region, and they are closely monitored to prevent their recidivism. In November 2007, Saudi Arabia released 1,500 detainees after they allegedly recanted their radical beliefs. An estimated 3,200 detainees are said to have gone through the program since 2004.[45]

Yemen is in a much more precarious position than Saudi Arabia. Its vulnerabilities are manifold:

- half-hearted cooperation with the United States in the war on terrorism
- weak state capacity to govern and control all the regions of the country
- porous borders, which enable arms and human smuggling to flourish
- a heavily armed civilian population
- lack of government capacity or will to regulate thousands of institutes run by Islamists.

Like Saudi Arabia, Yemen's cooperation with the United States in the war on terrorism enables radical Islamists to argue that the government is siding with unbelievers in their war on Muslims. Yemen receives economic aid, special training, and direct security and military assistance from the United States because of its cooperation in the war on terrorism. The government of Ali Abdullah Salih, like that of Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan, is in a no-win situation. Failure to cooperate with the United States could halt economic aid and unleash hostile measures by the international community because of the presence of radical elements within the Yemeni state and society. Cooperation, on the other hand, has proven tremendously unpopular among Yemen's citizens and Islamists.[46]

As a result of these clashing interests, the Yemeni regime has engaged in a balancing act that gives the appearance of cooperation in the war on terrorism, while simultaneously seeking to placate Islamists through a revolving-door policy –hard-core militants are captured, "reformed" and released in a very short timeframe. Several "reformed" Yemenis were later found in Iraq. For example, Khaldun al-Hukaymi, who was arrested on charges of involvement in the USS *Cole* attack, was killed in Iraq in an operation against coalition forces.[47] This balancing act satisfies neither the United States nor Yemen's Islamists. The former has threatened to withhold economic aid, while the latter continue to carry out attacks in the country.[48] The latest deadly attack was carried out on 2 July 2007. A suicide

bomber, Abduh Muhammad Rahbaqaha, blew up eight Spanish tourists and their two Yemeni drivers as they were touring the Balqis Temple in Marib.[49]

In 2006, 23 Al Qaeda prisoners escaped from a Sanaa prison. The facility belonged to the Political Security Organization, the leading intelligence agency, which reports directly to the president. The escapees included major figures such as Jamal al-Badawi, the mastermind of the USS *Cole* attack; Fawwaz al-Rabii, who was convicted of the attack on the *Limburg* (he was eventually killed in October 2006); and Abu Asim al-Ahdal, who is believed to be the number two man in AQY. This escape reflects the sympathy in the security services for dangerous terrorists. The prisoners must have generated three truckloads of debris in digging a tunnel 44 m long and 70 cm wide. More damning to the security services, the tunnel's direction was perfectly plotted to reach the women's bathroom in a nearby mosque. The escapees were able to sneak in tools such as small pickaxes, shovels, and chisels to break the stones and concrete blocks in their way. The government blamed two security officers and two soldiers from the Political Security Service for the escape.[50]

A major vulnerability for Yemen is the lack of state capacity to govern and control all the regions within its territory. Yemen's population is approximately 19.7 million, and it is one of the poorest in the world. Unemployment persists at 40 percent, and nearly 50 percent live on less than US$2 a day. Yemen is ranked 151 out of 177 nations by the UN human development index, which tracks economic, educational, and health indicators.[51]

Yemen's terrain is marked by ill-defined borders, a vast shoreline, and rugged and inaccessible mountainous regions. Regions such as al-Jawf, Shabwa, Marib, and Saada are controlled by well-armed tribes. They are known for their fierce independence, lawlessness, and proclivity to host renegades. Many tribes in these areas resent state interference when it is exerted; they insist on handling their own tribal affairs. Yemen's armed forces are largely made up of personnel from the major tribes. As one observer put it, ''Not only are these individuals reluctant to fight their tribes, they are likely to tip them off of any impending action.''[52] Government attempts to arrest Al Qaeda terrorists in Marib in 2001 caused major armed clashes with the tribes, producing heavy government losses.

To be sure, these tribes are not ideologically committed in one way or the other. Rather, their loyalty is given to the highest bidder. They use their independence to gain patronage from the central government, substate actors and parties, and even foreign governments. They often manipulate the center to gain its support in intertribal struggles. The political authority and legitimacy of President Salih come from patronage, granting economic favors, and allocation of prominent government positions, resources, and salaries to tribal sheikhs and other clients. In many respects, the non-ideological nature of Yemen's tribal culture makes it difficult for radical Islamists to mobilize mass support. Nonetheless, tribes have provided national and transnational terrorists material support in the past.

Lack of control over tribal regions, especially those bordering on Saudi Arabia, has generated a lucrative smuggling industry. Yemen is flooded with weapons that are not subject to government control. One observer estimates that in Yemen there are ''more than three guns for every citizen.''[53] Bearing arms is well ingrained in Yemen's tribal culture. The arms trade is a major source of income for tribes and the profit margin can reach as high as 200 percent.[54] Major arms markets can be found in Al-Talh, Marib, and Jihana. These weapons have often made their way to Saudi Arabia and the Horn of Africa. A UN report in 2003 found that Yemen was the source of two shoulder-launched SA-7B missiles that had been fired at an Israeli airliner taking off from Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2002.[55] Yemeni smugglers have been known to hide shipments inside imported electrical

appliances, ceramics, and publishing materials imported by tribal intermediaries from Sanaa, Sadah, and Abayan.

One other vulnerability for Yemen is the inability or unwillingness of the government to regulate the thousands of religious institutions controlled by the Islah party. Islah was formed in 1990 as a conservative Islamic party that combines Islamists, northern tribal leaders, and businessmen. Although it is often portrayed as an opposition party, Islah is closely connected to the northern elite, and its recently deceased party chair, Sheikh Abdullah Ibn Hassayn al-Ahmar, was the head of the large Hashid tribal confederation from which President Abdullah Salih comes. Al-Ahmar had four sons in parliament, two with Islah and two with the ruling party. Sheikh Abdulmajid al-Zindani represents the Islamist strand of the party. He fought in Afghanistan in the mid-1980s and is accused of being an associate of Bin Laden. His influence stems from his ties to Saudi Arabia, control over thousands of Islamic institutes (*màahid alimyyah*), and business investments. Islah also runs the largest nongovernmental organization (NGO) in the country, known as the Islah Charitable Society. Al-Zindani is also the co-founder of the Islamic Al-Iman University in Sanaa. Established in 1994, Al-Iman University teaches Wahhabi orthodoxy to 4,500–6,000 students from 52 countries each year. It has produced many voices that support jihad in Iraq as well as volunteers there. Al-Iman University is famous for producing students like Ali al-Jarallah and Abed Abdul al-Razak Kamal, who murdered an opposition politician and three Baptist missionaries in late 2002.[56]

Given the popularity of the Islah party, its social reach, and its connections to the northern ruling establishment, it is difficult to see how the government, in which Islah plays a major role, could muster the will and resources to regulate thousands of educational institutions in order to please the United States. After 9/11, the regime tried to regulate educational institutions, beginning by deporting hundreds of foreign students. Yet, as of 2007, thousands of religious institutes remain outside the control of government supervision, and press reports continue to link jihadists to some of the institutions run by the Islah party.

Future outlook

There are two potential problems for Saudi Arabia and Yemen in the near future. The first is "returnees from Iraq."[57] Returnees bring with them a strong sense of empowerment, new skills in unconventional warfare, and a profound antipathy toward Shiites and Muslim governments that cooperate with the United States. The second is the palpable rise of sectarian tensions in the region and competition with Iran, which could ignite Sunni-Shiite clashes in the Gulf.

Saudi Arabia and Yemen contributed many foot soldiers to the jihad in Iraq and some have already come back. Saudis from nearly all areas of the kingdom, from various social classes, and from among religious and non-religious backgrounds have volunteered to fight in Iraq. Some are connected to earlier jihads or were wanted by the authorities, but many were newly radicalized by the war in Iraq.[58] The Interior Ministry reported 682 interceptions of border crossers from Iraq in the first six months of 2005.[59] Reports in April 2006 have suggested that up to 3,000 Saudis have crossed the border to join the Iraqi insurgency.[60]

Returnees from Iraq come back not only with new experiences in jihad and advanced expertise in insurgent tactics, but also with a strong sense of righteousness after tormenting the only remaining superpower in the world. The Saudi and Yemeni regimes are in a no-win situation with regard to Iraq. If the situation there worsens, Iraq could become a base

for anti-regime militants; if the situation stabilizes, volunteers may begin returning with plans to spread the jihad. However, there are a number of factors that may mitigate the threat from returnees:

- The death rate of foreign fighters in Iraq is high, so there may not be that many surviving fighters to return to their home countries.
- Neighboring countries have learned the lessons from returnees from Afghanistan in the late 1980s and are preparing for the blowback from Iraq.
- The returnees are likely to bring with them extreme tactics that will alienate the local populace, especially in contexts where there is no foreign presence with which to contend.[61]

An indicator to look for in the future is the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to assassinate government and security officials. In Iraq, IEDs have proven to be the most effective means to kill heavily protected US and Iraqi military personnel. The use of tactics from Iraq in other Gulf countries is the most reliable indicator that foreign fighters have come home.

Persistent violence against the Shiites and the Iraqi security forces has encouraged Iran to play the role of "protector" of its coreligionists in Iraq. This scenario resembles what happened in Lebanon during the 1970s and 1980s, when Syria and Israel fought their proxy wars through support for local militias, at the expense of thousands of Lebanese lives. Israel positioned itself as the protector of the Christian Maronites, while Syria and Iran acted as the protector of the Shiites through sponsorship of Hezbollah. Iran, which continues to support Hezbollah in Lebanon today, has already expanded its sphere of influence into Iraq through its military support of militias. Moreover, the uncertain future surrounding Iran's nuclear program means that Iran has the option of utilizing Iraqi-based militants to strike back at Western powers if the latter choose to further constrain Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Iran's involvement in Iraq could induce the Saudi regime and other GCC countries to sponsor Sunni insurgents in their proxy war with Iran.[62] GCC countries supported Iraq's eight-year war with Iran during the 1980s in order to contain Iran. Saudis fear expanding Iranian influence on their border given the substantial and aggrieved Shiite minority in the eastern province. Furthermore, the Wahhabi establishment in Saudi Arabia detests Shiites for their alleged creedal innovations and heresies.

Regional and sectarian tensions could engender Wahhabi-Shiite clashes in Saudi Arabia. Shiites make up approximately two million of the 18 million Saudis in the kingdom. They are concentrated in the oil-rich eastern province. Although they have been gaining rights since 1993, they still encounter tremendous discrimination due to the control of the social sphere by Wahhabis.[63] There are hardly any Shiites in positions of authority, whether as headmasters in public schools or managers in the civil service and private sector. Their grievances include restrictions on religious practices and rituals in public, denial of permits to build mosques, limits on developmental investment in their oil-rich province, and poor housing and living conditions.[64]

Since 2006, Sunni clerics and scholars have been launching verbal attacks on the Shiites, recycling old arguments concerning their presumed heresies and on why shedding their blood is permissible. If Saudi competition with Iran grows, it is almost certain that the Shiites will encounter further discrimination. In the past, they were accused of being a fifth column for Iran. Although the government is not likely to tolerate outright attacks against its Shiite communities, escalating anti-Shiite rhetoric could be used as a

recruitment theme. *Sawt al-Jihad* (*Voice of Jihad*), the online magazine of QAP, had this to say about Saudi Shiites in its 30th issue, which was published in February 2007: "Every Muslim must be alert to what occurs in the near future and be wary of the role that the Gulf's *rawafid* [renegade Shiites] will play in the coming stage. I expect that it will be similar to the role that Iraq's *rawafid* played after the US occupation began. Any tension in the Gulf region is bound to entrench the presence of US military forces in the Arabian Peninsula's eastern part following a green light from the peninsula's treasonous tyrants, who have brought calamities on the Muslims' heads and who continue to do so."

Yemen, too, is vulnerable to sectarian tensions spilling over from Iraq. The Salafist-Zaydi divide in the northern region of Yemen could be exploited by radical Islamists. The majority of the Yemeni population living in the central and southern parts of the country are Shafi`is (Sunnis). A slightly smaller number, living in the northern governorates, is Zaydi (Shiite). In the 1990s, some of the returnees from Afghanistan attacked Muslim shrines and mosques in the south associated with the Twelver Shiites. Zaydi Shiites have also been targeted by Wahhabis in the North since the 1980s. There have been threats to destroy the tombs of Zaydi imams and their domes in Yemen.

The presence of Salafist groups in the areas of Saada resulted in the creation of the Faithful Youth movement associated with the Huthi clan, in part to counter the Salafists. The Huthis already accuse the government of giving too much power to the Salafists and even using them to repress their rebellion in Saada. The Salafists, in turn, have issued religious rulings legitimizing war against the Huthis in the north. Like Saudi Arabia, Yemeni returnees from Iraq will probably bring with them a virulently anti-Shiite discourse that could generate Zaydi-Salafist clashes.[65]

These negative forecasts are by no means inevitable, but they do point to vulnerabilities that could be exploited by radical Islamists to radicalize and recruit young Saudis and Yemenis. Saudi Arabia appears to be better positioned than Yemen to contend with the threat of terrorism in the near future. However, Saudi Arabia's close alliance with the United States, exclusionary political system, and Wahhabi worldview have so far failed to prevent the ideological radicalization of some of its citizenry and the externalization of Saudi violence worldwide. The terrorism threat in Yemen, on the other hand, is likely to grow in the near future. The regime's half-hearted suppression of radical Islamism and weak ability to monitor borders and track terrorists, and the prospect of jihadists returning from Iraq make Yemen an attractive launching base for Al Qaeda operations in the Gulf.

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Notes

1. In an audiotape released on 16 December 2004, Usama Bin Laden urged his followers to attack oil facilities in Iraq and the Persian Gulf. The 74-minute tape was released by the al-Qalah website, www.qal3ah.net. A year later Ayman al-Zawahiri issued a similar call in a 43-minute videotape released by the Sahab media production, http://alsaha.fares.net/sahat/.ee6 b2ff, on 7 December 2005.
2. This figure is derived from the chronology sections of the *Middle East Journal*.

3. *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – the Gulf States*, "Security," http://www.janes.com (accessed 25 January 2007); *Al Hayat*, "Saudi Arabia in 2006 Has Become a Model for Success in Confronting Terrorism" (in Arabic), 1 January 2007.
4. This article does not address the insurgency in the Saada region of northwest Yemen. In June 2004, a rebellion broke out by the Zaydi (Shiite) Faithful Youth movement, better known as the Huthis – named after their now deceased leader Hussein Badr al-Din al-Huthi. Although it first appeared to be an anti-American and anti-Israeli movement, subsequent reports suggest that it was a mix of an anti-establishment and anti-Salafist tribal rebellion. The brutal and indiscriminate response of the central government to the movement may have transformed the struggle into one of tribal revenge. The government accuses foreign elements from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Libya of supporting the rebellious Huthis, but these charges appear to be politically motivated, not a genuine assessment of the rebellious movement. For more information on the Huthi rebellion, see Faisal Mukaram, "The Battleground Expanded to Include All of the [Saada] Region" (in Arabic), *Al Hayat*, 25 February 2007; Arafat Mudabish, "Yemen: A Story of Rebellion" (in Arabic), *Asharq al-Awsat*, 2 March 2007; Al-Jazeera, "Interview with Muhammad Yahya Azan," *Today's Interview*, hosted by Ahmed al-Shalfi, 1 April 2007.
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11. Jonathan Schanzer, *Al-Qaeda's Armies: Middle East Affiliate Groups and the Next Generation of Terror* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004), 67.
12. The three-page communiqué appeared on 7 November 2006 on the al-Ekhlass online forum.
13. Michael Knights, "Gulf States Face New Security Challenges," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 17 (May 2005): 32–35.
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54. Ibid.

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